A little salt goes a long way.

Starting with the first snowfall of the year and continuing throughout the winter months, **[insert your county, state]** relies on sodium chloride (commonly called rock salt) and other chloride-containing ice-melt products to reduce snow and ice accumulation on our roadways. As a nation, we use roughly 20 million tons of road salt per year (source: U.S. Geological Survey, Mineral Commodity Summaries). Runoff from rain and snow then carries that salt into storm drains, which empty directly into nearby streams, causing potentially dangerous spikes in salt levels.

Increased salt levels in streams can corrode pipes, harm our pets, and make it tough for wildlife to find clean, safe drinking water. Many of us ([approximately 117 million Americans](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-04/documents/2009_12_28_wetlands_science_surface_drinking_water_surface_drinking_water_study_summary.pdf)) depend on local streams for drinking water too. Water treatment plants are not equipped to filter out excess salt, so road salt can end up in our tap water, where it can cause health concerns for people with high blood pressure.

The problem is getting worse: [Chloride concentrations approximately doubled in the northern U.S. from 1990 to 2011](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969714017148), increasing even faster than the rate of urbanization in the region. According to the [New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services](https://www.des.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt341/files/documents/wmb-4.pdf), damages due to road salt cost the U.S. $16-19 billion a year. More traffic and more roads will only exacerbate the problem further.

Traveling safely is important to all of us – and we can keep our roads and sidewalks ice-free while not destroying water quality in the process. Community members and government officials need to work together to reduce salt use, find alternatives to road salts, and stop the pollution of our nation’s streams, rivers, and lakes.

For more information about road salts, please visit saltwatch.org.